



# Baltimore Sexual Assault Response Team (SART)



December 1, 2010

# Timeline

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- Discovery of unfounded rape cases – June 2010
- Mayor Rawlings-Blake immediately establishes hotline and orders audit and review of internal practices – June 2010
- Mayor Rawlings-Blake tasks MOCJ with leading review process with SART – June 2010
- SART holds first meeting to address unfounded rape complaints – July 8, 2010
- Weekly SART committee meetings
- New Commanding Officer named to lead Sex Offense Unit – September 2010

# Mayor's and Commissioner's Charge

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- Conduct a full and transparent audit of unfounded cases
- Review internal procedures and improve investigative processes
- Work with SART partners to develop and implement best practices
- Reduce the number of unfounded sexual assault complaints
- Improve training
- Treat all victims with dignity and respect

# SART –

## Multidisciplinary Team Members

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- Baltimore City Police Dept
  - Sex Offense Unit
  - Child Abuse Unit
  - Crime Lab
  - CODIS
  - Legal Affairs
- Mercy Medical Center – FNE Program
- Mayor's Office on Criminal Justice
- Turnaround – Advocacy
- State's Attorneys Office
- Maryland Coalition Against Sexual Assault
- Baltimore City Child Abuse Center

# Purpose of the Sexual Assault Response Team:

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- A collaborative system established 15 years ago to:
  - Coordinate medical care and evidence collection at a designated site.
  - Support a network of agencies that interact with victims of sexual assault.

# Studying National Best Practices

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- Members of SART attended the United States Senate Judiciary Committee Hearing “Rape in the United States: The Chronic Failure to Report and Investigate Rape Cases”-September 14, 2010.
- Members of SART visited Philadelphia and met with a number of agencies including the Philadelphia Police Department Special Victims Unit, Women’s Law Project, and Women Organized Against Rape.
- Discussion included the audit/review process, partnership and cooperation with numerous agencies, transparency, and co-location of functions.
- Training and best practices ideas were shared between cities and a commitment to working together.

# New Police Procedures

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- Patrol officers may not unfound reports of sexual assault.
- All sex offense complaints must be referred to the Sex Offense Unit and a report must be written.
- A detective from the Sex Offense Unit is required to respond to a sexual assault call for service if a victim is located.
- No sex offense complaints may be unfounded without approval of an immediate supervisor and the Unit Commander.
- The Commissioner appointed a new commander to lead the Sex Offense Unit and additional personnel changes have been made.
- Detectives in the unit have undergone specialized training

# Results -- Improved Outcomes

## Since July 2010:

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- 84% decrease in unfounded rape and attempted rape cases.
- 67% decrease in unfounded sex offense cases
- 15% increase in reported rapes and attempted rapes



# Audit Review Process

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- The SART was tasked with reviewing all unfounded rape cases from January of 2009 through August of 2010. The SART also reviewed cases referred through the hotline, reports of rape unfounded by patrol officers, and a random sampling of other forms of sexual assault that were unfounded.
- The SART created an audit committee with representation from all member agencies and organizations.
- Detectives partnered with victim advocates from TurnAround to re-interview the adult victims of the cases identified for review.
- Those re-interviews with the case files were presented to the SART audit committee to determine whether the case was correctly classified and what can be learned from the handling of the case to inform better practices.
- The SART audit committee made recommendations as to whether each case should remain unfounded or be reopened. Where there was disagreement among members of the committee, the committee's recommendation was to reopen the case. If the recommendation was made to reopen the case, the committee recommended the appropriate classification for the reported crime based on the available information.

# Audit Summary

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- Review of 135 unfounded sexual assaults reported between January 2009 and August 2010.
- 71 cases to be reclassified (28 reclassified as rape)
- 64 properly unfounded
- Total of 148 cases reviewed.

# Audit Results

From Jan. 1, 2009 through August 1, 2010, 98 reported rapes were unfounded by the Sex Offense Unit. The audit committee reviewed the 98 cases and made the following recommendations:

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- Reclassify 24 cases as rape
- Reclassify 1 case as an attempted rape
- Reclassify 1 case as a statutory rape
- Reclassify 2 cases as possible sexual child abuse
- Reclassify 1 case as a 1st degree sex offense
- Reclassify 1 case as 3rd degree sex offenses
- Reclassify 1 case as a 4th degree sex offense
- Reclassify 20 cases as possible sex offenses
- Reclassify 1 case as incest
- 2 cases were correctly downgraded from rapes to assaults
- 44 cases were correctly unfounded

# Audit Results

The audit committee reviewed 20 calls for service for rape that were unfounded by patrol officers during the same time period. The following recommendations were made:

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- Reclassify 10 cases as possible sex offenses
- Reclassify 1 case as a rape
- 8 cases were correctly unfounded
- 1 call was correctly recoded as an domestic assault

## Audit Results

The audit committee selected a random sample of 16 other sexual assault complaints made during the same time period that were unfounded and made the following recommendations:

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- Reclassify 3 cases as rape
- Reclassify 3 cases as possible sex offenses
- Reclassify 1 case as a 3<sup>rd</sup> degree sex offense
- 9 cases were correctly unfounded

## Audit Results –

The audit committee reviewed the 14 calls to the Sexual Assault Hotline operated by Turnaround from victims asking for their cases to be reviewed.

- Only one case had been unfounded – it has been reopened.
- Four cases are currently open and to date no suspect has been identified.
- Two cases were investigated by police and exceptionally cleared with concurrence of the State's Attorney's Office. These cases are being reviewed to determine if charges can be pursued by the State's Attorney's Office.
- Two cases resulted in charges being brought against suspects and the victims are dissatisfied with the court outcomes.
- One incident did not occur in Baltimore City.
- Four cases were not previously reported and are currently being investigated.

# Moving Forward

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- Putting Protocols Into Practice
  - “Operationalizing” victim centered response
  - Collaboration between members
  - Overcoming barriers
- Communication with Community
- Evaluating the Work of the SART
  - Protocol implementation
  - Protocol effectiveness
  - Victim experiences

# Baltimore's SART

## Best Practices Subcommittee

- Developed mission statement
  - “To provide a collaborative, victim-centered response to sexual violence in our community.”
- Drafted Memorandum of Understanding
  - Partner agencies include BPD, SAO, MCASA, MOCJ, Mercy, TurnAround, BCAC
- Reviewed policies/procedures
  - BPD (General Orders and Sex Offense Unit SOPs), Mercy SAFE Program, TurnAround, BCAC
- Drafted 24-hour SART activation protocols; flow chart will be created to illustrate
- Began interviewing candidates for SART Coordinator
- Next steps: finalization of above; submission of proposal to present at National Sexual Assault Conference



# Byrne Grant

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MOCJ in Partnership with the SART applied for and received a Byrne Grant in the amount of \$278k from the Governor's Office of Crime Control and Prevention. The Grant will fund:

- A full-time SART Coordinator to support the work of the SART and oversee the implementation and monitoring of the recommended policies and procedures
- A Victim Advocate who will work for Turnaround
- A Public Outreach campaign
- Video Equipment to record Victim Interviews to assist in prosecution
- Software for a Database to allow tracking of functions of all agencies involved in response
- Outsourcing of Analysis of Rape Kits
- Training for Detectives